

## THE QUERY PROGRAM:

The Bureau queries for two main purposes: (1) to complete items that are either missing or contain inadequate information in order to complete the death certificate; or (2) to obtain additional information needed to assign the proper underlying cause of death (ICD9).

The best way to avoid receiving queries is to make sure the record is completed properly before it is filed. Therefore, this instruction sheet contains information concerning the proper completion of death certificates, specifically as it relates to cause of death reporting.

While the following is not an exhaustive list of all the reasons queries are sent, they are the most common reasons:

Conditions that always elicit a query (when they are listed alone or as the underlying cause) are:

1. Ill-defined conditions such as failure of an organ. Instead, the name of the disease of that organ should be listed if applicable; if not, the cause of the failure should be listed.
2. Symptoms such as fever, shock, palpitations, etc.
3. Diseases that are usually secondary such as CHF, GI hemorrhage, sepsis, etc.
4. Modes of dying such as cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest or failure, etc.

*If any of the above types of conditions are all that is known and they must be used, a statement such as "etiology could not be determined" following the condition will prevent a query from being sent.*

Some other reasons for queries are:

5. Items left blank or not fully completed.
6. Certificates that contain questionable sequences, such as a heart condition listed as being due to a cerebral disease; a disease with a long duration being reported as due to one with a shorter duration; etc.
7. Illegible words.
8. Use of symbols or abbreviations which may have more than one interpretation (such as 2<sup>o</sup>, which has been used to mean second degree, second to, secondary, etc. and CVD which could mean either cardiovascular disease or cerebrovascular disease).

Both **sequence and positioning** of the information reported on the death certificate are extremely important. You will note that the term "DUE TO (or as a consequence of)" is actually preprinted on the death certificate form as a guide for the certifier. That is why the cause of death section for physician certification is divided into two categories:

Item #27 Part I is used to report the sequence of conditions that resulted in death. In descending order that is: immediate cause, intervening cause(s) and **the underlying cause of death** listed on the last used line in Part I.

Item #27 Part II is used for listing all other significant conditions that may have contributed to the death, but did not cause the condition listed as the underlying cause in Part I.